



Committee on Homeland Security

Democrats

**Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking
Member**

www.house.gov/hsc/democrats/

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DEMOCRATS CALL FOR COMPLETE AUTHORIZATION: HOMELAND SECURITY PRIORITIES MUST BE ADDRESSED

April 27, 2005, Washington, DC — The House Committee on Homeland Security will mark up its first Department of Homeland Security authorization bill today as a standing committee.

Congressman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), Ranking Member of the Committee, said this about the process:

“What we do today will help set the course for where the Department is headed over the next year. I hope we will do what is right. As we go through this process this week, there are homeland security priorities that are critical and must be addressed if we are to protect our nation. Unfortunately, the base bill that is being introduced does not address the priorities.”

At the mark-up, the Democrats on the Committee will introduce the “Complete Homeland Security Act,” the Democratic substitute to the Republican plan for authorizing the Department of Homeland Security. The substitute addresses such priorities as port security, critical infrastructure, aviation, diversity, first responders, and management that the Republicans authorization bill fails to address.

Some of the funding highlights of the Democratic plan include:

- \$380 million to hire, equip and train 2,000 new border patrol agents;
- \$1 billion in funding for port, rail, and transit security;
- \$500 million for communications interoperability;
- \$900 million to begin halving the length of time for completing the Coast Guard’s Deepwater program;
- and full funding for the 9/11 Act’s commitment to detention spaces, air passenger and cargo screening, and radiation portal monitors.

The amendments offered in the substitute bill comprise a thorough approach to border protection, mandate the protection of key critical infrastructure, support the development of new technologies, and create structural change at the Department of Homeland Security itself.

In describing the substitute's contents, Congressman Thompson said, **"The first thing we need to do is make sure the Department has its act together internally. If the Department's Inspector General and Privacy Offices are weak and its staff lacks basic employee protections, then the agency is destined to fail or be mediocre at best. In addition, if it can't get its own computer networks to talk to one another, how can it possibly help our first responders talk to one another in a time of crisis?"**

The Congressman also stated, **"I wish that the base legislation before us would have been more comprehensive. We need a bill that addresses all the glaring gaps in homeland security, as well as the deficiencies our oversight has uncovered at the Department."**

The Complete Homeland Security Act is available on the Democratic Homeland Security Committee website at <http://www.house.gov/hsc/democrats/>.

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